NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

FIREBREAK

(FEET)

CODE 394

I. SCOPE

The work shall consist of furnishing materials and equipment as required to construct strips of bare land or fire-retarding vegetation that can control the spread of fire. Location of each firebreak segment is designed on the conservation plan map or a specially prepared map.

II. TYPES OF FIREBREAKS

A constructed firebreak consists of two parts - a strip of land cleared of most trees, shrubs and other large flammable material (*fuel break*) within which a narrower strip is cleared down to mineral soil (*fire line*).

A system of fuel breaks alone may be installed with fire lines installed only if uncontrolled fire breaks out.

Fuel Break

- Existing natural barriers such as ponds, lakes, streams, rock barriers, permanently moist areas and vegetative communities with naturally low flammability.
- Grazed strips where herbaceous plants and low shrubs are harvested by livestock and/or wildlife to a height of 18-inches or less.
- Treated strips where vegetation is managed by controlled burning or approved herbicides.

Fire Line

- Existing artificial barriers such as roads, railroads and associated rights-of-way, utility lines, and irrigation canals.
- Plowed, dozed or graded strips.
- Treated strips that are created and maintained by the application of approved herbicides.

III. FIREBREAK INSTALLATION

Fuel Break

Minimum fuel break width is 66-feet.

Vegetation within the fuel-break strip is reduced to a height not exceeding 18-inches with all shrubs over 18 inches removed.

All slash and debris will be burned on-site or hauled off-site and disposed of properly.

Flammable vegetation exceeding 18-inches in height will either be harvested by livestock or mowed and removed.

If fuel break vegetation is to be grazed by livestock, grazing management will be in accordance with conservation practice standards and specifications for PRESCRIBED GRAZING (Code 528).

If fuel break is to be planted, specify fire-resistant species to be used for revegetation. See standards and specifications for RANGE PLANTING (Code 550) or CRITICAL AREA PLANTING (Code 342).

Trees may be left in the fuel break strip if the D + X spacing for the tree species is increased by one-third of the recommended distance listed in the FOREST STAND IMPROVEMENT (Code 660) conservation practice specifications.

Trees exceeding 20-feet in height must have lower branches pruned to a minimum height of 8 feet above ground. See conservation practice standards and specifications for WOODLAND PRUNING (Code 660)

III. FIREBREAK INSTALLATION (continued)

Fire Line

Minimum fire-line width is 8-feet.

The fire line is cleared to mineral soil.

Dispose of slash and debris by burning on-site or hauling off-site.

All flammable material (including leaves and needles) will be removed.

If a fire line is either constructed on the contour or has a controlled grade for the secondary purpose of emergency access, increase the width to permit travel by local fire-fighting equipment.

Control erosion on cleared areas using non-flammable measures, *e.g.*, waterbars, and non-flammable mulches. Where slopes exceed 5 percent, erosion control structures will be installed.

IV. LOCATING FIREBREAKS

Account for all existing artificial and natural barriers that quality as firebreaks. Install new firebreaks to augment and connect existing barriers. Utilize ridge-top and drainage bottom positions where feasible. If a network of firebreaks is planned, firebreak segments will not be located further than 3-miles apart. The areas of protection may be further subdivided based on the value of the resource at hand and nearby improvements. Whenever possible, position the firebreak on a controlled grade or follow the contour to allow emergency access along the fire-line.

Map Identification. Mark all firebreaks (constructed, artificial or natural) on the conservation plan map or prepare a to-scale sketch for later reference. Percent gradient of each firebreak segment and erosion control structures installed will be listed to facilitate emergency access and for maintenance purposes.

V. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

MAINTENANCE

Inspect firebreaks prior to the period when local fire danger ratings reach moderate or higher levels.

Fire line strips of exposed mineral soil will be inspected at least semiannually.

Rework bare ground firebreaks as necessary to keep them devoid of flammable vegetation.

Mow or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a build-up of dead litter and to control weeds.

Inspect for and remove woody materials such as dead limbs and blown down trees from within firebreak.

Inspect annually and clean or repair erosion control measures as necessary to assure proper function.

Access by vehicles or people will be controlled to prevent damage to the firebreak.

Bare ground firebreaks that are no longer required will be stabilized.

OPERATIONS

Operations shall be done in such a manner that soil erosion is minimized and the impacts on air and water resources do not exceed state air and water quality standards.

The owner, operator, contractor, and other persons shall conduct all work and operations in accordance with proper safety codes for the type of equipment and operations being performed with due regard to safety of all persons and property.